1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

614 Classed with respect to major administration, therefore, the clan may be regarded as an informal *adelphiarchy* (*ἀδελφός* and *ἄρχος*) or *adelphocracy* (*ἀδελφός* and *κρατός*). It has none of the elements of the patriarchy, since male lineage is not recognized, and can not be classed as a matriarchy, since the clanmother is administratively subordinate to her brothers; while the avuncular functions are apparently inchoate and indirect, i. e., exercised only through or in conjunction with the clanmother. In short, the clan is ordinated or regimented in ostensible accordance with physical power, though the real faculty is confused (after the fashion of primitive thinking generally) with mystical faculties, imputed largely on magical grounds but partly on grounds of age-reverence, etc. Now, when two or more clans combine, the basis on 578 which the common chiefship is determined is similar to that determin- 614 ing the clan leadership; at the outset three factors enter, viz, (1) the ●643 seniority of the clans in the accepted tribal mythology (2) the prowess [756] of the respective clan leaders (always weighed in conjunction with the shamanistic potency of their consorts), and (3) the numerical strength of the respective clans; but practically, so far as can be judged from all available information, the choice really reflects physical force, since in case of doubt the strongest and bravest man becomes the eldest by virtue of his strength and bravery, while the strongest clan finds fair ground for claiming seniority in the very fact of its strength. Naturally disputes arise in the adjustment of the several relations; and in the actual analysis in council, the dispute is commonly reduced to a contest between gods and men, i. e., between the claims for mystical and magical potencies on the one hand and the claims of brawn and bone on the other hand, so that strength wins, unless omens or prodigies turn the scale—which happens often enough to keep the subjective and the objective elements in fairly equal balance. Sometimes the contests are quickly settled; again they last for months, during which the tribe struggles under its weight of Cerberus heads; and repeatedly the disputes have ended in the annihilation of clans, or even in the tribal fissions attested by the recorded and traditional history of the Serian family.

643 The chiefship once determined, the leader bends all energies toward maintaining the position by which he is dignified and his clan exalted. He recognizes his responsibility for the welfare of the tribe—not only for success in battle and food-getting, but for stilling storms at sea, protecting the aguajes from the drought-demons, and securing all other benefits, both physical and magical; he must be aggressive yet cautious on the warpath, fleet and enduring in retreat, indomitable in the chase, bold but not reckless on the balsa, and above all panoplied and favored by the shadowy potencies of air and earth and waters; he must be the local and lowly Admirable Crichton, and his never-neglected watchword must be *noblesse oblige*. His practical devices for maintaining prestige are many and diverse; it is commonly the chief who carries the sym-

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

bolic weapon, the counterfeit cartridge, the imitation machete, or other charm against alien power; it is usually he who wears the white man's hat or random garment in lieu of the deer or lion mask of earlier days; and during recent years his most-prized fetish, and one which practically insures the support of his fellows, is a written certificate of his chiefship from Señor Encinas, or, still better, from El Gobernador at Hermosillo. Yet he is a throneless and even homeless potentate, sojourning, like the rest of his fellows, in such jacales as his two or three or four wives may erect, wandering with season and sisterly whim, chased often by rumors of invasion or by fearsome dreams, and restrained by convention even from chiding his own children in his wives' jacales save through the intercession of female relatives. 643 [648]

In 1894 the head chief was reported to be on Tiburon; the putative chief of the rancheria at Costa Rica was the taciturn giant known as El Mudo (plate XIX); while Mashem (or Juan Estorga) was the head of one of the Pelican clans.

ADOPTION

One of the more important factors in demotic development among primitive peoples (probably second only to interclan marriage in extending sympathy and unifying law) is adoption; and special efforts were made to obtain data relating to the subject. Direct inquiries were futile, the responses indicating that the entire subject is foreign to the thought of the tribe; but three sporadic and measurably incongruous examples of quasi adoption are worthy of record. 594 [124]

The most specific case is that of Lieutenant Hardy, who visited Isla Tiburon in 1826, and was fortunate in gaining the confidence of the tribe through successful medical treatment of the wife of the chief. On his second landing he was greeted with many expressions of gratitude, which were especially exuberant on the part of the daughter of the family (always a personage in Seri custom), who insisted on painting his face. He specifies: 597 648

> Not wishing to deny her the indulgence of this innocent frolic, I quietly suffered her to proceed. She mixed up part of a cake of blue color, which resembles ultramarine (and of which I have a specimen), in a small shell; in another, a white color, obtained by ground talc, and in a third was mixed a color obtained from the red flint-stone of the clam which I before stated was to be found on Seal Island, and resembled cinnabar. With the assistance of a pointed stick the tender artist formed perpendicular narrow stripes down my cheeks and nose, at such distances apart as to admit of an equally narrow white line between them. With equal delicacy and skill the tops and bottoms of the white lines were finished off with a white spot. If the cartilage of my nose at the nostrils had been perforated so as to admit a small, round, white bone, five inches in length, tapering off at both ends and rigged something like a cross-jack yard, I might have been mistaken for a native of the island. As soon as the operation was finished, the whole party set up a roar of merry laughter, and called me "Hermano, Capitan Tiburon," being the very limited extent of their knowledge of Spanish.[1] [386] [302]

[1] Travels, p. 286.

3:Davis & Dawson E-5 (1923-1940) 1945
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372 773 it take its two hands, rub them over its head and then rub them together a few times? The Indians noticed this and in this way we were taught by this little fly how to make fire by rubbing a stick back and forth between our two hands."

773 In response to comments about the nocturnal howling of the coyote, Chico told another interesting tribal legend. "A long time ago all Seris were birds or animals. The badger had charge of the saints or gods, which were little images carried in a pouch and hung around his neck by black strings.

[142] [302]

● [643] FIG. 19. CHICO ROMERO
WHO SUCCEEDED OLD JUAN TOMAS AS CHIEF OF SERIS.

Coyote got to quarreling with badger and, watching his chance, grabbed the bag, tore it loose and ran off with it, giving his derisive laugh as he ran, and ever since coyote has been laughing at badger and all others.

[p.266(A)]